

Message Text

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12

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R 050350Z JUN 75

FM AMCONSUL KARACHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8907

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: BHUTTO SURVEYS SIND SCENE

SUMMARY: IN APPARENT RESPONSE TO RECENTLY RISING ETHNIC/LINGUISTIC TENSION AND RULING PARTY FACTIONALISM IN SIND, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO SPENT MAY 28-JUNE 1 IN KARACHI, MEETING GROUPS OF PARTY LEGISLATORS AND LEADERS SERIATIM. COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO AND SIND CHIEF MINISTER GHULAM MUSTAFA JATOI, PRIMARY PROVINCIAL ANTAGONISTS, WERE ALSO ACTIVE. BHUTTO'S CLOSED-DOOR POLITICKING HERE MAY INDICATE THERE HAD BEEN SOME EROSION IN HIS POSITION IN HIS HOME PROVINCE WHICH REQUIRED HIS PERSONAL INTERVENTION. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE THE MID-1972 LANGUAGE RIOTS BETWEEN URBAN URDU-SPEAKING "MUJAHIRS" (POST-PARTITION REFUGEES FROM INDIA) AND RURAL SINDHI SPEAKERS, SIND HAS BEEN A RELATIVELY PLACID PROVINCE. MANY FRUSTRATED YOUTHFUL SINDHI ADHERENTS OF "SINDHU-DESH" DISSIDENT G.M. SYED, NOW CONFINED TO HIS ANCESTRAL VILLAGE, HAS TRANSFERRED THEIR LOYALTY TO MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO; WITH HIS REPLACEMENT AS CHEF

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MINISTER BY JATOI IN DECEMBER 1973, "MUHAJIRS" WERE PLACATED, IF

NOT RECONCILED WITH THE RULING PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP). ETHNIC/LINGUISTIC CONFLICT AMONG SINDHIS, "MUHAJIRS", AND PUNJABIS SURFACED LESS FREQUENTLY AND WAS MOSTLY CONFINED TO COLLEGE STUDENTS. THE MAY 11, 1975, BANNING BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SIND OF 36 "OBJECTIONABLE" (READ SUBVERSIVE OR OBSCENE) SINDHI-LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS BY G.M. SYED AND OTHERS, AND THE SEALING OF TEN SINDHI HYDERABAD PRINTING PRESSES, REVIVED LATENT ANTAGONISM. THOUGH NO ONE TOOK TO THE STREETS, SINDHI ELEMENTS WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE PPP, SOME LINKED TO MUMTAZ BHUTTO, PROTESTED THE BAN; "MUHAJIR"-SUPPORTED OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, OTHER "NATIONALISTS", AND THE NON-SINDHI PRESS APPLAUDED THE BAN.

2. FACTIONAL DISPUTES WITHIN THE RULING PARTY IN SIED, DAMAGING ITS STANDING WITH THE POPULACE, HAVE ALSO BECOME MORE BLATANT AND BITTER. FOLLOWING HIS REHABILITATION AS COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER IN OCTOBER 1974, MUMTAZ BHUTTO HAS TOURED SIND FREQUENTLY, PLEDGING TO RURAL AUDIENCES THAT SINDHIS WOULD BE GIVEN THEIR "DUE SHARE" IN THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE COLLEGES (WHICH HAS ANTAGONIZED THE "MUHAJIRS" AND PUNJABIS) AND DENOUNCING CORRUPTION AND INEFFICIENCY IN THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION (THUS DENIGRATING JATOI). THE WELL-REGARDED, EVEN-TEMPERED CHIEF MINISTER RARELY RESPONDED IN KIND, ALTHOUGH FOLLOWING THE NOVEMBER 1974 LETHAL ROTGUT LIQUOR SCANDAL (KARACHI 2221 11/12/74) HE IMPLIED THAT HAJI KASIM ABBAS PATEL, A DISREPUTABLE PRO-MUMTAZ PROVINCIAL LEGISLATOR, HAD PROFITED FROM THE ILLICIT TRADE. STRIKING MORE STRONGLY AT MUMTAZ' MEN, IN LATE APRIL 1975 JATOI URGED TWO OF THEM (PROVINCIAL LEGISLATOR NABI BUKHSH BURGHARI AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY-MAN ALI AHMED TALPUR) TO RESIGN. JATOI LATER ANNOUNCED AN INQUIRY INTO LEGISLATORS' ABUSE OF THEIR POSITIONS FOR PRIVATE GAIN, IMPLYING THAT A MUMTAZ INTIMATE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TAJ BIBI BALUCH, HAD MUCH TO ANSWER FOR.

3. FOLLOWING THESE DEVELOPMENTS, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO, ACCOMPANIED BY MUMTAZ, MADE A HURRIED VISIT TO KARACHI ON MAY 28. (AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD REPORTS THAT AN IRANIAN MILITARY GROUP WAS TOLD AT THE LAST MINUTE TO SEE BHUTTO IN KARACHI, NOT ISLAMABAD.) THE PRIME MINISTER MOVED ABOUT BEHIND AN UNPRECEDENTEDLY TIGHT SECURITY SCREEN AND GAVE NO PUBLIC SPEECHES OR INTERVIEWS. FLANKED BY CHIEF MINISTER JATOI, HE MET FOR FOUR DAYS WITH GROUPS OF PPP LEGISLATORS FROM EACH OF SINBH'S THREE ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS.

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ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT THE PRIME MINISTER CRITICIZED BEFORE THE PROVINCIAL PPP POLITICIANS JATOI'S INABILITY TO UNITE THE PARTY,

CAUSING THE CHIEF MINISTER TO BECOME ILL OVER THE DISCOURTEOUS TREATMENT HE RECEIVED. (MUMTAZ MET SIMULTANEOUSLY IN HIS NATIONAL SHIPPING CORPORATION BUILDING PENTHOUSE OFFICE WITH HIS SUPPORTERS AMONG SIND POLITICIANS, TRADE UNIONISTS, AND STUDENTS.) THE PRIME MINISTER THEN MET WITH THE KARACHI PPP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

ITSELF DIVIDED BY CITY LEADER KAMAL AZFAR'S ATTEMPTS TO REORGANIZE IT AND BUILD A BASE FOR HIMSELF. THE PRIME MINISTER LEFT FOR ISLAMABAD JUNE 1. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE VISIT WAS LIMITED TO DAILY GROUP PHOTOS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS LISTING PEOPLE BHUTTO HAD RECEIVED.

4. COMMENT: THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OFTEN HECTIC PUBLIC ACTIVITY AND PUBLICITY WHICH MARKED BHUTTO'S PREVIOUS KARACHI VISITS AND THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES POLITICKING TO WHICH THIS ONE WAS DEVOTED HAS PROVOKED SPECULATION IN KARACHI. THERE WAS LITTLE TALK OF IMMINENT PROVINCIAL CABINET CHANGES -- THE USUAL STOCK IN TRADE OF POLITICAL OBSERVERS -- BUT RATHER INCREASING MENTION OF MALAISE IN THE PROVINCE AND THE RULING PARTY. SOME "MUHAJIRS" ASSIGN A DEVIOUS AND DIVISIVE ROLE TO MUMTAZ BHUTTO. THE PRIME MINISTER APPARENTLY COULD HEAL THE DIVISIONS IN THE SIND PPP NEITHER BY CALLING THE FRACTIOUS POLITICIANS TO ISLAMABAD, NOR BY SENDING AN EMISSARY TO KARACHI. THAT BHUTTO DECIDED TO (OR HAD TO) SURVEY THE SCENE IN PERSON HAS BEEN INTERPRETED BY SOME AS AN INDICATION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOLD ON HIS HOME PROVINCE HAD WEAKENED SOMEWHAT IN RECENT MONTHS. WHETHER HE EFFECTED ANY LASTING TRUCE AMONG THE SIND PPP FACTIONS IS AS YET UNCLEAR.

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